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WATERFOWL FOOD IMPROVING IN
CURRITUCK SOUND AND BACK BAY

Waterfowl-food plants in the Currituck Sound - Back Bay region in North Carolina and Virginia show an encouraging recovery this year from the pollution and turbidity of the water that a few years ago threatened to ruin what was once a hunter's paradise, reports the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Bureau investigators have recently found a better crop of duck-food plants growing in the region that has been known there for several years. The plants, they report, are healthier and are appearing in areas that have been barren for some time.

After removal of the locks in the Albemarle-Chesapeake Canal in 1918-- a war measure and one intended to facilitate commerce--pollution, explains the Bureau, came into the sound and bay through the canal. The water became turbid, and waterfowl-food and fish conditions in the area grew progressively worse.

Restored about a year ago, the locks again block the movement of water carrying industrial pollution from Norfolk and Portsmouth. The turbidity, which prevented the sun's rays from penetrating the water and thus made plant growth almost impossible, is clearing up as rapidly as could be expected, says the Biological Survey.

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G. C. C. WORKERS CONTROL RODENTS

The President's program of Emergency Conservation work has given the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Forest Service opportunity to carry on more extensively long-needed control operations to decrease the numbers of injurious rodents on national forests. Each year these pests destroy many seedlings and growing trees and cause erosion by their workings in the surface soil, killing off ground cover, and breaking earthen check dams and drainage ditches by burrowing through them. For example, on some plantations in the Superior National Forest in Minnesota, Forest Service officials report that rabbits have seriously damaged 94 percent of the living white pine, of which 64 percent is recent; 85 percent of the Norway pine, of which 59 percent is recent; and 86 percent of the spruce, of which 57 percent is recent. In Wisconsin also plantations were damaged heavily.

The seriousness of porcupine devastation in national forests, including plantings, is well illustrated in southwestern Colorado, where on one forest approximately 200,000 acres are so badly infested with porcupines that these rodents are reported to be more destructive to trees than is any other agency.

On the Nebraska National Forest, in western Nebraska, where a large area of open land is being forested, it is impossible to grow the trees without first removing pocket gophers. In mountain areas of the West these rodents are especially objectionable as the causative agents of destructive erosion. In summer the pocket gophers throw the dirt removed from their burrows to the surface, piling it up in mounds. When the snow comes in fall, and before it has melted away in spring, they push the surplus dirt

out of their underground workings in the form of long, chainlike ridges, or miniature dikes. With the melting of the snow, these earthworks form grade channels for water, which starts definite erosion scars. Later, when cattle and sheep enter the mountain areas, the trampling stock break into the shallow runways, creating more passageways to carry off the rains and melting snows, and thus erosion is further facilitated.

Civilian Conservation Corps' workers are chosen from the large Concentration Camps established on the national forests, working in crews of six to twelve men, distributing grain baits about the burrows of the rodents.. The baits are especially prepared at a Bait Mixing Station maintained by the Biological Survey at Pocatello, Idaho, where the best grade of oats obtainable is purchased, to be steamed and crushed there before being treated with a coating of starch and strychnine. The baits are first thoroughly cleaned to remove cracked kernels and weed seeds, which might endanger bird life, and great care is taken to prevent the spread of injurious seeds in the process of distributing the grain. The prepared bait is shipped to the various camps in heavy burlap, paper-lined bags, securely tied with wire.

When the men leave camp in the morning each carries a canvas bag filled with this poisoned grain, which he distributes carefully about the holes where ground squirrels, pocket gophers, prairie dogs, and kangaroo rats, and other rodents will find it. Each crew works under the supervision of a foreman who has had previous Biological Survey training in rodent-control methods. It is noticeable in each camp that many men are anxious to join the rodent-control squads, as it is a type of work that is not only of interest to them but one that shows immediate and beneficial results. From present indications the season's operations will record excellent work done in rodent control by the members of the Civilian Conservation Corps.